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ABSTRACT

The merging of the earlier post-industrial era with the current period of high technology has given the contemporary American lifestyle a leisure orientation. It is generally accepted that the process of leisure education involves five component areas: leisure awareness, self-awareness, decision making, leisure skills, and social interaction. To date, leisure education is most frequently applied in adult education programs at the fourth component level, leisure skills. Because many of the significant variables in leisure education are also significant in adult education, it would appear that a philosophical base exists for the integration of leisure education and adult education. By methodically integrating leisure education modules in terms of on-going values exploration, career development, preretirement issues, adult development, life cycles, and similar areas, adult educators can enhance present offerings available in adult education program delivery systems. Experiences designed to encourage, facilitate, and identify leisure appreciation and awareness obtained during leisure-time activity have the potential to add depth to comprehensive adult education programs and are applicable to andragogical principles and procedures. (MN)

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Leisure Education and Adult Education

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LEISURE EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION

The merging of the earlier post-industrial era with the current period of high technology has oriented contemporary American lifestyle toward leisure-centeredness. Research has demonstrated that individuals not only value leisure but also that they are functioning within a more leisure oriented society. Managers of adult education delivery systems have an active role to play in assisting adults cope with this highly esteemed leisure oriented value system. Leisure education, which is specifically designed to facilitiate leisure understanding and growth potential in adult learners, is a viable addition to the present adult learning repetoire. The intent of this article is to examine the concept of leisure education and consider its applicability to adult education settings.

The conceptual integration of leisure education and adult education is fundamental to the belief that education is a continuous process throughout life. The philosophical foundations of leisure education include the belief that the search for alternative experiences never ends and does in fact change in focus as one's lifestage changes. Such factors as physical, emotional, social, and economic circumstances profoundly influence the identification of leisure alternatives.

THE SUBSTANCE OF LEISURE EDUCATION

Leisure education is but one of several ways of learning about the myriad of choices which one has in the continuous pursuit to discover satisfying leisure experiences. It is concerned with the lifestyle and the evolution of individual leisure values throughout the developmental stages of a lifetime. It is also concerned with the clarification of leisure values in response to changing life

~~life~~ circumstances and it involves the periodic review of the wide range of leisure possibilities potentially available to an individual. It also involves an assessment of the consequences accruing from the implementation of specific leisure options, and it ultimately culminates in the selection of a desirable repetoire of leisure behaviors which can reasonably be expected to provide the most satisfying outcomes from among the options perceived to be available.

In this sense, leisure education provides a "menu" of possible experiences which may be appropriate to the life interests, and the culturally conditioned tastes and preferences of the individual. Through a process of testing, reinforcement, and social learning, the individual engages in what is essentially a decision making process to finally determine leisure choices which are deemed to be most appropriate and which are expected to be most fulfilling.

It is generally accepted that the process of leisure education involves five component areas. These include (1) leisure awareness, (2) self-awareness, (3) decision making, (4) leisure skills, and (5) social interaction. With the adult learner, self-directed human interaction and mutual exploration encourages the learner to develop leisure growth potential. Preparation for periods of desired or enforced leisure time throughout adulthood requires and allows for much more cognitive and affective involvement than in childhood.

To date, leisure education is most frequently applied in programs of adult education at the fourth component level, leisure skills. Many recreation activity courses are presently offered through programs of community adult education and in university and college continuing and extension education programs. Providing leisure alternatives for the leisure time user is an important function but limits the focus to only one of the five competency areas. Merely having developed leisure skill does not guarantee that the learner will grow through leisure, just as knowing how to read does not guarantee an appreciation of literature. Leisure

growth potential is released by facilitating the process which encourages leisure awareness within a decision-making and social interactive context. Implemented in this fashion, the individual becomes better able to purposefully select from among acquired leisure skills or is able to systematically isolate and acquire other leisure skills felt to be desirable.

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN LEISURE AND ADULT EDUCATION

A review of ~~those~~ factors which appear to be significant variables in leisure education also appear to be significant in adult education, and it is the shared importance attached to these factors that provides a philosophical base for the integration of leisure education and adult education.

Social Conditioning is certainly a significant variable in the development of leisure values. The tastes and preferences reflected in the nuclear family members, as well as members of reference groups with whom one identifies, can, in large measure, pre-condition the selection of leisure experiences. Popular culture also dictates to some degree the form and substance of meaningful leisure experiences. Reinforcement, which derives from peer acceptance and from the approval of authority figures, can play a significant role in the formulation of leisure choices and the playing of social roles in the pursuit of leisure experiences. There appears to be a significant relationship between the adoption of leisure behaviors within groups and the level of dependency which each member exhibits toward the group. Certainly, during those stages in maturation when identification with a group is paramount for self-esteem and recognition, the practice of prescribed leisure patterns is part of the requirements for group acceptance. Conformity to group norms in the selection of leisure pursuits can weigh heavily.

As Maturity is accompanied with a greater sense of self-identity, the diversity of leisure preference is broadened. One frequently practices those leisure pursuits which have been fulfilling in earlier years but adapted to the physical, social, and cognitive constraints of the current lifestage. New leisure patterns are acquired in relation to one's ability to adapt to change and growth, and as one acquires a family and new social relations, the leisure pursuits focus upon meeting an ever-changing set of needs.

The role of past experience is also significant in the selection of leisure pursuits. Through leisure education, one has the opportunity to explore and analyze the significant leisure experiences of the past which have had an important influence on one's current leisure repetoire. Self-reinforcing leisure experiences are grounds for repeating the behaviors which led to those experiences, and non-reinforcing experiences are grounds for discarding the non-satisfying behaviors. In the analysis of preferred leisure patterns, the learner has the opportunity to explore in depth the underlying motives for preferred patterns, and to identify significant outcomes from those experiences which could be retained and practiced again in later life. The relationship of past experience to lifelong learning is readily apparent.

In those situations where life change has curtailed the ability to practice previously satisfying leisure experiences, one must look at the possibility of adapting or substituting leisure pursuits which have the potential of providing similar outcomes for the individual. One of the greatest assets available to the human is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. An analysis of leisure alternatives which could be used in substitution for previous leisure experiences that are no longer available is an area which requires additional study. Substitutable leisure pursuits and the similar outcomes which can be experienced from different pursuits provide a great potential for the leisure educator. Through

the process of providing alternatives and analyzing outcomes, the leisure educator can help define appropriate leisure pursuits which are better suited to the subject's lifestyle.

Another significant factor requiring exploration is the matter of autonomous decision-making processes related to leisure. It is suggested that social learning is partially a process of adapting one's early autonomy to the norms of society. From the ambivalance which comes when one wishes to select an independent course in leisure in the light of some rather glaring social constraints, to the stage of conformity to group norms for the sake of self-esteem, the process of making decisions related to leisure reflects a developmental process as well. Children are at the same time autonomous in their demands upon parents and dependent upon parents and siblings for approval and self-esteem. Adolescents are dependent upon peers for approval and seeking to establish their independence from parental constraints. Young adults evaluate their decisions many times to the reference groups which are significant in their life, and older adults who, with their life experiences and wisdom, might be in the best position to decide leisure pursuits autonomously, are frequently tempered in their decision making by physical and/or economic constraints. It is frequently the leisure educator who must point out the requirements for rational decision making at each step along the way. In this role, the leisure educator serves as a facilitator of the decision making process.

INTEGRATION INTO ADULT EDUCATION

The notion that adults desire opportunities to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning has been well documented. This has become one of the basic tenets of self-directed learning. By emphasizing the "self" in learning,

the leisure education process encourages full participation by the learner. The learner's initiative (active search) to acquire leisure knowledge makes the process purposeful and self-motivating to the learner. Further, the concept of freedom which is inherent in leisure itself, makes independent choice of one's leisure behavior a prerequisite in leisure exploration. Thus, the responsibility for one's own leisure learning, coupled with the reality and acceptance of individual choice, reflects the close relationship existing between the andragogical and leisure education process. Thus, andragogy provides an instructional mode well suited to the learner-initiated or self-directed inquiry necessary in leisure education.

Leisure education can become readily integrated into existing adult education systems on both a highly structured (e.g. classroom) and less structured (e.g. seminars) plane. Short term workshops, perhaps weekends or weeknights, could also provide a conducive learning environment. Influencing and modifying traditional learning environments to address the discipline of leisure can be experimented with much like other typically adult education offerings are at the present time. The important aspect of social interaction could be enhanced through group dialog in the above formats, or be built into an individualized instruction program by encouraging the adult learner to pursue leisure knowledges with others in some systematic manner. Discussions regarding the leisure dimensions relative to social conditioning, maturation, past experiences, life changes, and autonomous decision-making can also be structured.

Attention can be paid to leisure by methodically integrating leisure education modules in terms of on-going values exploration, career development, pre-retirement issues, adult development life cycles, and similar areas. Leisure education could become a segment of a staff development program or an extension of an employee recreation program. Workshops focusing upon organizational or personal

decision-making, for example, could adapt leisure based simulations rather than the characteristic issues related to work or to the family. Leisure education can be added to programs stressing human potential and human resource development by centering upon leisure as related to self-development or self-awareness, job development, or to social interaction.

In summary, lifelong learning advocates have long promoted individual freedom to indulge in non-compulsory educational learning environments. Leisure education provides the content for the establishment of one such learning environment. Lifelong leisure learning and development can enhance present offerings available in adult education program delivery systems. Experiences designed to encourage, facilitate, and identify leisure appreciations and awarenesses obtained during leisure time activity and pursuit, have the potential to add depth to comprehensive adult education programs and are applicable to androgogical principles and procedures.